

# HOME TIES *and the* FOREIGN MISSION FIELD

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By

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*"Then welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough;  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand,  
but go!  
Be our joys three parts pain,—  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
Learn, nor account the pang;  
Dare, never grudge the throe!"*

—Robert Browning.

# HOME TIES *and the*

## FOREIGN MISSION FIELD

**T**HERE is no excuse so frequently and so strongly urged for not going to the foreign field as home ties. In my experience as a traveling secretary for the Student Volunteer Movement, I have found that many put forward the excuse of climate, language, inability, or some other reason, while the real difficulty or obstacle is some home tie. It is very important, therefore, that this question be considered without prejudice and, because of its sacred character, with sympathy and much prayer.

In nearly every case these home ties are relationships which God has made. The unusual case of one who is already a volunteer and makes a new alliance or covenant with one not in sympathy with the work, does not need discussion. Such persons sin against light and invent obstacles to place in their own pathway. They break a previous engagement.

There are to my mind seven reasons why home ties in very many cases are not a sufficient excuse for neglecting or disobeying a call to go abroad.

1. What God hath joined together, no man may put asunder, but God may. He has done so in the past and is doing so to-day. His Kingdom is more important than any human relationship. The call of Abraham is an illustration in point; so is that of Elisha (Genesis 12:1-9; I Kings 19:19-21).



2. The excuse is not a valid one because, if granted, it would prove too much. Home ties are universal. Every one has a father, a mother, sisters, or brothers. There are not enough *orphans* to evangelize the round world in this or in any generation. Every missionary now at the front has broken some home tie to go out to the foreign field. Mothers leave their little children each year; husbands are often separated for a long time from their wives; it is a commonplace of missionary history that home ties must be broken; every farewell meeting to our missionaries is a witness to it. If you expect them to go, why not go yourself?

3. You have no right to put a premium on *your* home ties. What is there about your father that was not true of the father of David Livingstone or John G. Paton? In what respect is your mother more dear to you than Keith-Falconer's mother was to him? Is there anything about your sister that was not true of the sister of Alexander Mackay of Uganda? And if Henry Martyn had to leave his Lydia Grenfell at the call of the King, why should you not leave yours, if she cannot go with you to the front. There seems to be something manifestly unfair in this discrimination in favor of your relatives, unless you are willing to allow the principle to have a general application. What would you say if all the missionaries of your Board were to urge it against their return to the field when on furlough? A visit to one of the many Homes in America where missionaries' children are cared for in the absence of their parents on the field would straighten out this matter for you in a very practical way.

4. Although the breaking of ties in Christ's service is often at the cost of tears and sacrifice, He himself meets the difficulty in a very heroic way. Not attempting to unravel the Gordian knot of your home ties, He cuts right through it with the sword of the Spirit, "He

that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." After this last passage from St. Luke's Gospel there follow, very significantly, the parable of the man who set out to build a tower and that of the king who went to war. And then comes the application, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:25-33.)

5. Christ's example should inspire us with willingness to sever even the most tender home ties at His call. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Once He left all for us. When the call came to Him he said, "Lo I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God!" He was obedient.

"My Father's house of light,  
I left for earthly night,  
For wanderings sad and lone;  
I left, I left it all for thee;  
What hast thou left for Me?"

The servant is not above his master. Christ does not ask of you what He has not done Himself and done for you. Are you willing to admit that home tie, a tie of blood, which binds you to your other Father and your Elder Brother? He is out on the foreign field and is perhaps waiting there for you; are you willing to stay here?

6. To break home ties for a great cause is proof of Christian heroism. The history of exploration and discovery, the annals of patriotism, and the records of the nations afford a thousand examples. Consider for a moment the wonderful series of Polar expeditions and the number of home ties broken



to add something to our knowledge of the Arctic and Antarctic regions. And yet who of those heroes ever posed as a martyr for breaking home ties? The Orient is full of merchants who leave all at home for the sake of lucre, or pleasure, or empty honor; shall the followers of Christ hold back on the plea of homesickness for loved ones? The Anglo-Saxon or Celtic blood in our veins should belie any charge of cowardice or of unwillingness to sacrifice all at the call of duty. We are the children of the Pilgrim Fathers, the Covenanters and the Huguenots. They broke home ties for conscience sake, and shall we fear to break them for the spread of the Gospel?

7. Consider the great and lasting compensations. When God made a great demand on Abraham's faith and put his love to the test, He said: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." He did not lose Isaac, but gained him and with him the promise. No home tie was ever broken for the work of missions without a great recompense of reward. "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." "A hundred-fold," that is, in plain English, you get 10,000 per cent. on the investment.

Such are the seven reasons that to my mind invalidate the excuse some give of home ties

for not going to the foreign field. Are you willing to search the Scriptures and your own heart and reconsider the question without prejudice and without flinching, with faith, courage and prayer?

“I said, ‘I shall miss the light  
And friends will miss me they say;’  
He answered, ‘Choose to-night  
If I am to miss you or they.’”

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